'Mr. Average' now leans to McGovern

By Larry S. Finley

President Nixon may have lost the vote of Richard J. Johnson, the "average middle American" from suburban Rolling Meadows.

After spending a few days on the campaign trail with George McGovern, Johnson, the lifetime Democrat, announced in September that he was probably going to vote for Nixon. Now he says he's leaning towards McGovern.

Johnson, 43, was selected last January as an average voter by the National Public Affairs Center for Television.

PRESIDENT NIXON'S latest peace moves in Vietnam and Paris have changed Johnson's thinking.

"Thank God, the peace is coming," he said. "But I can't help wondering if the whole thing is just politics, motivated to swing votes.

"I'm really in the middle right now. I'm considering voting for McGovern. I really don't know. I probably won't until I step in the booth and pull the lever."

Johnson, the credit manager for National Steel Service Center in Evanston, said a lot of his friends also are undecided the day before the election.

"A lot of people are on the fence now," he added. "It's an election of two people that people aren't too interested about and they have to vote for one."

JOHNSON SAID that neither candidate inspired too much enthusiasm. He previously was leaning towards Mr. Nixon because he has done a "commendable" job in the last four years.

His real choice for the job would be Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.)

"It would be a different election if he were running," Johnson said. "I'd know who to vote for then."